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Letter dated 12 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on Azerbaijan: political prisoners, issued on 9 January 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Ryan**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 12 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement on Azerbaijan: political prisoners, issued on 9 January 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union welcomes the official decree issued by the President of Azerbaijan on 29 December 2003 in which 160 prisoners were pardoned, more than one third of whom were political prisoners. The European Union acknowledges this as a positive step forward by Azerbaijan in respect of its obligations to the Council of Europe. However, the European Union remains concerned about the situation of those arrested following the disturbances on 16 October 2003, and urges the Azeri authorities to ensure that they will soon be brought to a fair and open trial or released.

The European Union encourages the Government of Azerbaijan to continue to demonstrate its commitment to fulfil its undertakings to the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the candidate countries Bulgaria and Romania, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.